

# **THE WSFA**

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# **JOURNAL**

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The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

**October 2006 – ISSN 0894-5411**

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**Mailing Address:** WSFA Journal, 5911 Edsall Rd. #611, Alexandria, VA 22304

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**Breaking News! Reading the Journal Increases IQ by 40 Points!**

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## **FROM THE EDITOR...**

Hello, all!

It is not an optical illusion, the Journal is actually in print (and online, but I digress).

This has been a hellish pair of months for Kat and me. In sequence, we:

- Looked for *and bought* a condo;
- Moved out of DC;
- Unpacked our stuff;
- Dealt with commuting (a new adventure for Kat);
- Dealt with the death of an old friend and a memorial service in New Jersey;
- And sundry other business.

In short, it's been a very hard time to get anything like work done.

However, moving forward, it's Capclave time and, last we heard, things were going along well on that front. This Journal should be available at Capclave, so (with any luck) you're enjoying yourself quite well as you read this.

See you all soon!

Drew



## **ESSAYS, LETTERS AND OTHER MUSINGS**

### **Living in October Country**

Drew Bittner

Nobody appears to be musing this month. So let me take a stab at it.

Fear. That's what Halloween is about. The thrill of sitting in a theater and watching Hollywood's craftsfolk do their best to shock and surprise the audience—most of whom are increasingly jaded and therefore harder to shock.

It is one thing to seek out films and books and TV shows for this kind of adrenaline-pumping exercise. We do so for entertainment, to take our minds off our daily lives and survive (vicariously) diverse threats from sources supernatural and mundane. It is quite another to live with fear as your houseguest.

My wife and I bought our first home, and that carries its own set of fears. Will we be able to pay the mortgage? Is this neighborhood a place where we'd want to raise children?

From the personal to the societal: our national mood has been one of fear for more than five years. A single terrorist act has transformed our entire society, and many of the changes are not positive ones. A "rogue state" has become a nuclear power. Wars and sectarian violence threaten to engulf entire regions of the world. It is possible to discuss how these changes have or will affect us, individually and collectively, but it would be hard to argue that we live in a state of fear.

Although there are certainly sub-genres to the contrary, I would suggest that science fiction is not the literature of fear. (Neither is horror, really, but that's another issue.) Science fiction is the literature of hope, the genre that says there will be a tomorrow whatever may come. We have great challenges, today and tomorrow and a billion years from now, but we have it within us to overcome those challenges—to live for hope and not in fear.

As Halloween approaches, let's remind ourselves that in this world, where there suddenly seems to be so much more to fear, we have privately dedicated ourselves to hope.

Enjoy the goblins and ghouls, don't let them take too much candy (gotta have something left for November 1!) and remember, behind the masks we're all human.

## **MEDIA REVIEWS:**

### **The Book of Flying**

by Keith Miller

New York : Riverhead Books, 2004

A review by

Colleen R. Cahill

Just because a book is not marketed as fantasy should not deter a reader from trying it: a careful review of new titles can lead to some rich finds. Such is the case for me with Keith Miller's *The Book of Flying*, which delighted me with its subtle story of one man's quest to gain an impossible love. The compelling tale is delivered in a lyric style that swept one into a world of winged people, robber queens, talking rabbits and dark castles, all objects that practically scream fantasy, no matter what the publisher failed to note.

Pico is a librarian in a city where no one cares for books. He is the lone avid reader until the day that Sisi, one of the winged people, is so enchanted by the stories Pico tells that she begs him to teach her to read. The two become close and even share kisses, but when Sisi turns away, Pico is heartbroken. Through research in the library, he learns of Paunpuam, the morning town where *The Book of Flying* resides. If Pico can find his way to this far-off city and read the book, he can have wings and gain Sisi's love.

So begins Pico's journey, one that takes him into the forest and far beyond. He meets various colorful people along the way, such as Adevi, robber queen who is driven to steal the hearts of men. In contrast is the gentle Minotaur who guards a bridge and will slay any who attempt to cross, including his new friend Pico. A storm sends the librarian into the abode of a bespectacled rabbit who is striving to record all the knowledge in the world. In a black night, Pico stumbles across a weeping woman who was a vendor of dreams, then finds his way to a city where all the people are young. These adventures hold the tales of those Pico touches as he makes his way towards Paunpuam, creating a series of stories within the story. My favorite of these is "The Planet of Books", where volumes grow as plants do, from booklets to fat tomes, all with their own properties, making a "wonderful planet of living words." The author's love of books is clearly stated throughout this novel, not the least because he made the hero a librarian.

That *The Book of Flying* is a fantasy there can be no doubt: just the sections I mention above prove that. There are more tropes in the book, such as the immortal who will live as long as he can eat human flesh or the woman who sends her wooer to gain the flower from the country of death. These are intriguing ideas, but it is Miller's haunting words that truly raise this book to a higher level:

*I am dreaming. I'm dreaming of a city, a white city in the sun by the sea, a city of bells and birdcages, boatswains and ballyhoo, where heart-faced*

*wenches lean bare-breasted from balconies to dry their hair among  
geraniums and the air is salt and soft and in the harbor sailors swagger  
from ships that bear cargos of spices.*

Just these two opening sentences paint such a vivid picture that I feel I have been to this city and I want to go back.

Although this book as received little attention, it should be a must read for those who like poetic prose and fantastic elements in their books. This set of stories-with-a-story is one I am sure to re-read again and again and I highly recommend it to any fantasy fan.

## **WSFA MEETING MINUTES**

### **WSFA Minutes**

#### **Third Friday**

#### **Madigan's home, Maryland**

**September 15, 2006**

President Sam Lubell called the meeting to order at 9:20 Friday 15 September 2006 in the basement lounge of Madigan Manor. Lee Strong acted as Secretary in the absence of Drew Bittner.

Sam asked for a summary of the previous meeting. It was very wet.

Bob reported that the Treasury stood at \$10,299.66.

Elspeth Kovar, chair of Capclave Present, was not present. Barry Newton reported that there would be an origami party following the meeting to fold, staple, and stamp the 4 page flyer. We met and exceeded the room block requirement. There are 213 identifiable and 13 anonymous attendees planning to come. The deadline is the end of the month.

Will there be a day rate? If so, please send to the webmaster. Colleen Cahill stated that we will inform the webmaster after the Con Com settles what the day rate will be.

Cathy Green, publicity chair, stated we are pushing the flyers. We will start writing press releases. Mike Bartman suggested posting news of the con in the free places on the Internet. We are already posted on some. Please post away. *SFRevu* is donating a free ad. Sam thanked the magazine on behalf of WSFA.

Colleen, speaking for herself as chair of Capclave Future and for Sam Scheiner as chair of Capclave Far Future, said that they are pressuring the hotel for a contract.

The two future chairs suggested that WSFA make an award for literary merit to be given at Capclave. Colleen suggested the award be for original short fiction published by a small press. This is an unfilled niche. Short stories run from 1 to 7,500 words. She

suggested that a small press would be one that published from 6-25 titles per year. There are similar awards around but none in this exact niche. Brian Lewis asked if the stories needed to be in English. Yes. Barry asked if it were fair to ask for free books. Colleen suggested allowed the presses and authors to nominate themselves. They could send us an electronic version of the nominated work and we would promise not to share it outside the selection committee. We want to encourage small presses. Mike asked if anyone would really care about such an award. Lee opined Yes, his experience is that awardees will post awards on their wall that consist of nothing more than a letter saying that the awardees is in the top ten of their class. Will Frank said the award will sell itself. *The New York Times* book awards earned their reputation. Rich Lynch asked about cost. Colleen said she had no answer at this time. Judy Newton asked if we had enough people to support this award by doing the necessary work. Paul Haggerty suggested allowing the Capclave membership to vote for the winner. Sam appointed Colleen chair of the Committee to Set Up An Award. Other members are Bob, Cathy Green, and Sam Scheiner. Rich suggested naming the award for Will Jennings (Murray Leinster).

Bob, representing the informal committee to investigate a 2012 Discon bid, stated that we are waiting to determine whether or not the proposed hotel will be built. Rich asked if this was actually a WSFA activity. Bob stated that everything is conjectural at this point. The "pseudo-committee" is not a WSFA subsidiary. Sam ruled that the proposed bid was not a WSFA activity but it is worth discussing as a fannish activity involving WSFAans.

Entertainment Committee: The Kuiper Disc object previously known as Xena has been officially renamed Eris, in honor of the Greek goddess of strife. Mike noted that this name is very amusing since Xena's existence prompted the International Astronomical Union to reclassify Pluto as an "ice dwarf planet", a decision that caused a certain amount of strife.

Activities Committee: Sam read an email report from Lee Gilliland that WSFA will no longer receive free tickets for movie parties. Sam noted this without discussion.

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction had no report. Adrienne Ertman invited the Committee to consider her lab reports.

The Trustees had not official business or light report. The Rules Committee is close to finishing its research and expects to deliver a report in November. The Committee will consolidate our various policies into a Standing Rules document. Mike noted that we could call the policies by other names. Lee Strong preferred to use the term used by Robert's Rules of Order.

There was no Old or New Business.

WSFA welcomed Will Frank and Marcin "Marca" Garbowski to their first WSFA meeting. Will is a recent transplant to the area from New York City and Philadelphia. He started graduate college in May and currently works as a program manager in the Patent Office. He googled us up.

Marca Garbowski is here from his home in Lubin, Poland. He represents his home club which was formed by a merger of a literary club and gaming club and currently meets in a community center. They currently have 150 members including manga fans. Members have widespread interests and age variety. Most club members are students. About half of the members do LRP's. The *Baldur's Gate* video game and *The Lord of the Rings* popularized fantasy. They have hosted a mixed genre convention – games and science fiction. Sam commented that WSFA tends to be older and more literary. Marca continued that his club is targeting higher and higher goals. There do not seem to be too many SF clubs in the Washington area. He found out about Capclave from a flyer in a used book store in Silver Spring. He has finished high school. His mother works at the Holocaust Museum. His father wrote his post doctoral dissertation on J.R.R. Tolkien.

Announcements: Please submit your announcements via email to the [Editor@WSFA.Org](mailto:Editor@WSFA.Org) rather than relying solely on the Secretary's memory and notes.

On behalf of the hostess, the club announced that the white bunny bites, don't feed the dog chocolate, and the bathroom is working.

Rich announced that a Japanese organization printed his article on early fandom but it could have used more copy editing.

Colleen announced that Drew and Kat Bittner bought a condo in Alexandria. Marie Shriver will speak on doing research for novels at the Library of Congress on 16 October 2006. The National Book Festival will be held on the Mall 30 October. Sharon McCrumb will be there.

Judy Newton announced a cookbook on the Nippon 2007 website.

Sam Lubell asked if anyone wished to host a Fifth Friday party 29 September. This date does not conflict with Rosh Hoshanna.

The club unanimously adjourned at approximately 10 p.m. The acting secretary did not capture the exact time of adjournment.

Guests and members present included Mike Bartman, Colleen Cahill, Kevin Dawson, Adrienne Ertman, Carolyn Frank, Will Frank, Marcin "Marca" Garbowski, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Bob MacIntosh, Jarrad Moiers, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Evan Phillips, George Shaner, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Ivy Yap (not seen), and Madeleine Yeh..

After the meeting, the origami party assembled 600 flyers that Barry mailed the following day.

**WSFA Minutes**

**First Friday**

**Scheiners' house, Virginia**

**October 6, 2006**

CONVENED: The meeting convened at 9:18pm.

**ATTENDEES:**

Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Katherine Bittner, Colleen Cahill, Will Frank, Marcia Garbowski, Erica Ginter, Lydia Ginter, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Elspeth Kovar, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Sam Lubell, Bob MacIntosh, Tom McCabe, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Kathi Overton, Rebecca Prather, Jennifer Rosenbaum, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, Chris Springob, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surrette, Michael Walsh, Ted White, Ivy Yap

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary has received a report of the minutes from Third Friday from Lee Strong; they are attached to this report. Business raised during this report included discussion of an award to be presented at Capclave for "best original short form fiction."

TREASURER'S REPORT: WSFA has \$9952.66 in its account.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Capclave Present: It was reported that:

- we are saving money in dealing with the hotel and that they owe us significant favors, as they are hosting the UMD football team while Capclave is in progress. This has resulted in some dislocation of spaces.
- The "silent auction" is close to being in the black. Some proceeds may be donated to a memorial endowment established for John M. Ford.
- Michael Dirda (Washington Post) is confirmed.
- We have 210 paid memberships out of 280 total.
- SFWA is hosting a Saturday night formal party at 9:30 pm. Formal dress is preferred but not mandatory.
- Party themes for Capclave included Adopt A Book, Farewell to Pluto and a birthday party.

Capclave Future: To date, there is no contract with the hotel, but the committee is working on it. Memberships to Capclave 2007 will be sold at Capclave 2006 for \$30. Also, a GOH has been locked in: Jeffrey Ford. Of Ford, Colleen said on Yahoo!:

*At the WSFA meeting last night it was announced that the Guest of Honor for Capclave 2007 will be Jeffrey Ford. Jeff has won many awards, including the World Fantasy Award, the Nebula and the Edgar Allen Poe Award. Below are several links on Jeff, including one to the text of his award winning novelette "The Empire of Ice Cream". If you have never read any of Jeff's work, I encourage you to try some! It is wonderful, unpredictable, and never the same story twice.*

Capclave Far Future: Currently awaiting contract.

DC 2012 and WFC: no report.

Publications: Hard copies of the August and September Journals have been printed and will be made available (along with copies of the October Journal) at Capclave.

Per Mike Walsh, there are approximately 300 trade paperback copies of *Future Washington* still in stock, zero hardcovers.

Colleen has (and has emailed around) the WSFA mailing list. Please check to confirm that your information is current and accurate.

Paul Haggerty has found books for the WSFA Press Archive. Not all titles have been located but several are in hand.

Entertainment: Lee Gilliland was not present to offer a report in person but it was said that she is busy with her "Man from UNCLE" convention.

Activities: no report.

Rules Committee: Lee Strong has finished rereading 20 years worth of *The WSFA Journal* to extract the club's standing rules. Some members opined that Lee's brain was now rotted away from 20 years' worth of sustained silliness. Barry Newton noted that Lee now knew all the club's secrets. Lee just smiled. He is planning to reduce the various policies and rules to a single document and circulate it among the members for comment. Lee recommended placing the standing rules on the club website for future reference. The tentative timetable is November.

Trustees: no report.

Committee to Talk About Science Fiction: The double issue of *Asimov's* was to be the evening's subject for discussion.

OLD BUSINESS: All old business was tabled until the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: send email announcements to Drew.

Will Frank and Marca Garbowski identified themselves as two-time attendees. Various and sundry warnings were issued with regard to them showing their faces at WSFA a third time.

Lee's sister is getting married 14 October 2006. The club wished the happy couple "Mazel Tov" and other best wishes. The prescribed dress will be blue jeans. Colleen Cahill wondered if that meant "blue jeans only." Subsequently, Lee's sister thanked the club and said that she would also be wearing jewelry.

Lee's agency is moving to Illinois starting in 2007. They asked for volunteers to move but only 30% of the employees volunteered. Can you say "brain drain"?

Erica Ginter's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party is coming up. She has posted the following:

It is with great pleasure that I announce to all and sundry that I am turning 50 in November. To celebrate this popular baby-boom rite of passage, I am throwing a birthday party on November 11, 2006, at Stately Ginter Manor, 10404 43rd Avenue, Beltsville MD 20705.

Festivities will begin at 3:00 p.m. and end when we feel the need to drown the last stragglers in the currently inoperable hot tub.

Sam Lubell mentioned that he turns 40 this year. He was welcomed to "the club" by those of us who are already in our forties.

Cathy Green intends to hold a Halloween party, details TBA.

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 10:10pm.

POST MEETING NOTE: Bill Squire collapsed after the meeting and was attended by paramedics, who moved him to the local hospital for tests. He is said to be recovering and in good spirits as of last week. Cards can be addressed to him at: Bill Squire, 7015 Sycamore Ave, Tacoma Park, MD 20912.



## EVENTS

Please email upcoming events to [editor@wsfa.org](mailto:editor@wsfa.org) with the word "submission" in the subject line for consideration.

The big news is Capclave, running October 20-22 in beautiful Silver Spring, Maryland. Check out the spiffy website at [www.capclave.org](http://www.capclave.org)!

## IN MEMORIAM

**Wilson Tucker**

**Writer of bleak science fiction**

**Published: 12 October 2006**

Arthur Wilson Tucker, writer: born Deer Creek, Illinois 23 November 1914; married 1937 Mary Joesting (one son, one daughter; marriage dissolved 1942), 1953 Fern Brooks (died 2006; three sons); died St Petersburg, Florida 6 October 2006.

For most of his life he was almost two different people. As the author of at least 20 detective and science-fiction novels, Wilson Tucker was an esteemed professional writer from about 1940 until he published his last book in 1981. At the same time, as Bob Tucker, he was a full-time motion-picture projectionist who also served for 70 years as

the most intelligent and articulate and sophisticated fan the American science-fiction community is ever likely to boast of.

**John M. Ford**

**Science-fiction writer and poet**

**Published: 30 September 2006**

John Milo Ford, writer: born 10 April 1957; died Minneapolis c 24 September 2006.

His career might have seemed all fits and starts, except that his voice was unmistakable no matter what he wrote. The science-fiction writer and poet John M. Ford achieved long before his early death, almost by stealth, a quite extraordinary breadth of recognition for his contributions to American self-knowledge.

*-Both notices written by John Clute, published in The Independent, courtesy Mike Walsh*

**UPDATES**

Bill Squire is now home, having been discharged from the hospital after collapsing after the First Friday meeting. He is looking forward to hearing from WSFans.